

B A S I S



■ Broadening Access and Strengthening
Input Market Systems

STRATEGY FOR PROGRAM RENEWAL

BASIS CRSP **Broadening Access and Strengthening Input Markets** **Collaborative Research Support Program**

Provided by the BASIS CRSP Management Entity
The Land Tenure Center
1357 University Ave.
Madison, WI 53715
Tel: (608) 262-3657
Fax: (608) 262-2141
Email: basis-me@facstaff.wisc.edu
<http://www.wisc.edu/ltc/basis.html>

N o v e m b e r 1 9 9 9

Strategy for BASIS CRSP Program Renewal

I. Introduction

The BASIS CRSP is a 10-year cooperative agreement with the USAID Office of Agriculture and Food Security (USAID/AFS), renewable after the initial 5 years of operation. It began in October 1996.

During the 4th year of operations beginning in October 1999, USAID will evaluate the management performance of the CRSP, and the BASIS External Evaluation Panel will evaluate its technical performance including site visits to those regions where BASIS is currently working. By November 2000, USAID expects to receive CARMA's proposal for the 2nd five years of the cooperative agreement beginning October 2001. Based on this proposal and the above two evaluations, USAID/AFS will make its decision on program renewal.

The Management Entity (ME) will coordinate and lead the process of program renewal and negotiate any follow-on contract with USAID. The BASIS ME is seeking substantive contributions from its partners and researchers. This present document provides guidelines for program renewal, including details on process, timeline, outcomes, and decision points. Program renewal provides an opportunity to rethink the vision and management structure of the CRSP and to design changes in thematic and regional focus. It is a time both to seek solutions to current problems and to program new paths for policy-relevant research, training, collaboration, and institutional strengthening.

Our future success depends on the vision we create for ourselves, the quality of projects and activities we design to realize this vision, and our ability to achieve measurable results and impacts. The success of this mission will depend on the input we receive from you, our partners.

Key Dates for Participation:

December 1999: Email Conference to revise the BASIS CRSP Vision Statement.
(Instructions for participation will be sent separately).

March 2000: RFP distributed

July 2000: Deadline for submission of pre-proposals for BASIS CRSP, Phase II

Comments regarding BASIS CRSP renewal and suggestions for improvement should be sent at any time to Danielle Hartmann, dehartmann@facstaff.wisc.edu

II. End of Phase I

As the BASIS CRSP is intended to support long-term collaboration, it is anticipated for sake of continuity that work will continue in many of the current BASIS regions. It is also anticipated that research programs in Southeast Asia and Central Asia suspended in FY1999 due to lack of funding will be reopened. The number and priority of regions will depend on the availability of core funds and regional priorities negotiated with USAID. Researchers and organizations to lead projects in these regions will be selected based on the general principles developed in the next section.

Consequently, we must create an orderly transition from current to future projects, and from current to future researchers and program leaders. The guidelines in **Box 1** are intended to bring closure to all current programs and activities by 30 September 2001 in order to make way for these newly funded projects and activities.

Box 1: Guidelines for Bringing to Closure Phase I of the BASIS CRSP, October 1996 to September 2001
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Program renewal is not guaranteed, requiring the BASIS CRSP to make contingency plans for phasing out all programs by the end of the fifth year (ending September 2001).2. All regional program and project leaders/investigators must assume that project activities will come to an end on 30 September 2001 and plan research and dissemination activities to be completed by this time.3. Only activities programmed for completion by 30 September 2001 will be entertained for funding at the May 2000 TC meeting.4. Any new add-on approved under the BASIS CRSP during this period must show a schedule of program activities to be completed by 30 September 2001.5. USAID Procurements may allow for a no-cost extension, but this is not guaranteed.6. The BASIS Competitive Grants Program will not be offered in FY 2001 – there will not be an RFP announced in February 2000.

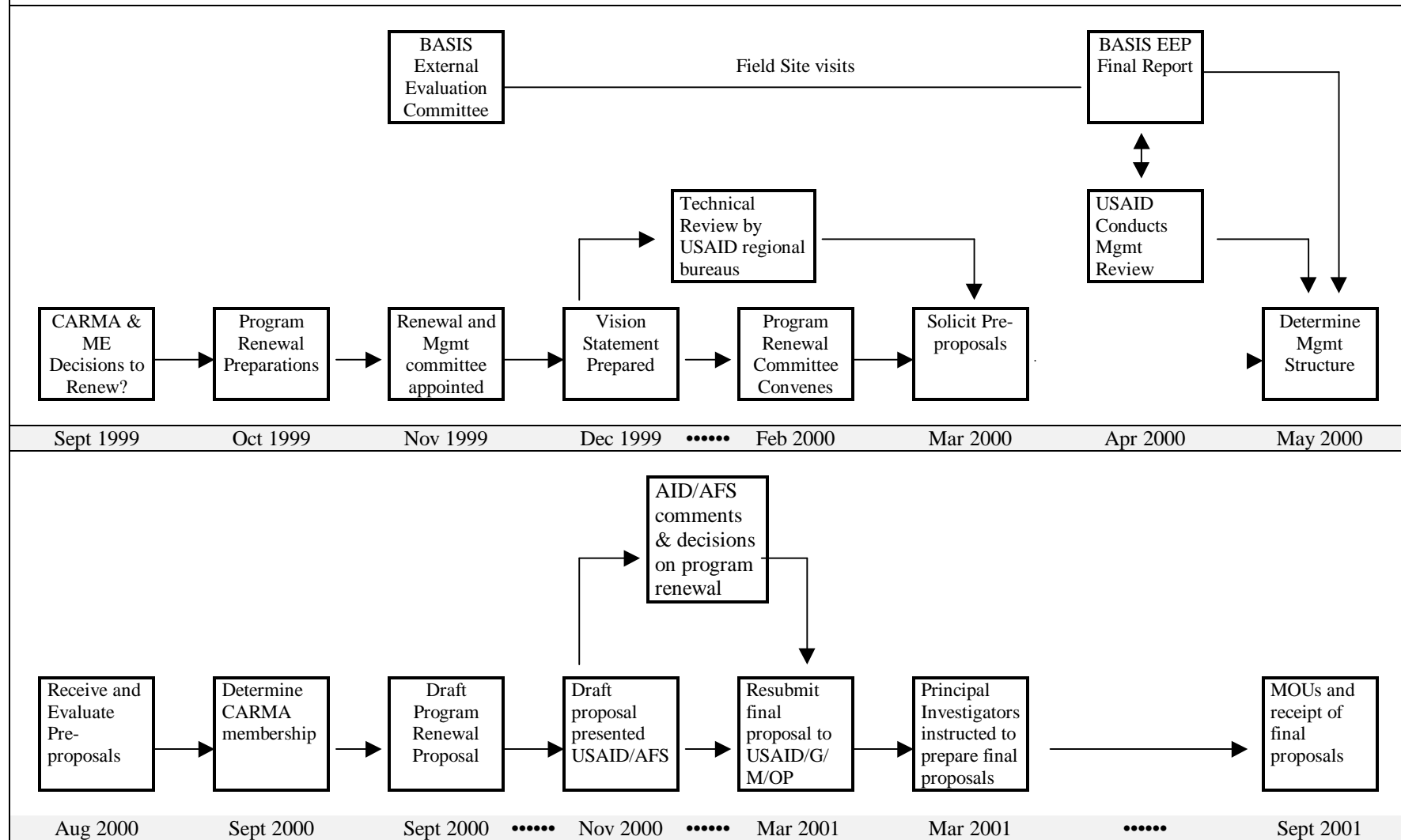
III. Phase II (Oct 2001 to Sept 2006)

A. Schedule

The BASIS Board of Directors convened on 8 October 1999 to discuss strategy for program renewal. **Box 2** outlines a strategic framework for program renewal based on the advice of the BOD and our review of the other CRSPs. Working from the present to the future, the following are key points to highlight:

- **Vision statement.** A new vision statement with global research priorities will be prepared with input from current partners.
- **Renewal Committee.** A Renewal Committee will convene in January or February 2000 to advise the ME on research priorities, regional foci, guidelines for solicitation of proposals, and management structure.
- **RFPs.** Future research programs funded out of core funds will be determined on the basis of competitively awarded grants solicited from present and prospective partners. The Renewal Committee will prepare the RFP.

**Box 2:
BASIS CRSP Strategy for Program Renewal**



- ***Proposal preparation.*** The ME will assume the responsibility of drafting and assembling the full proposal, including tasks of coordinating sub-committees and advisory bodies.
- ***Draft proposal to USAID/AFS.*** A draft of the proposal will be submitted by November 2000 to USAID/AFS, which will make its decision on program renewal and provide comments.
- ***Final proposal to USAID/Procurements.*** By March 2001, the ME will deliver to USAID procurements (G/M/OP) the final proposal.

B. Guiding Principles

Under Phase I of the program, the vision statement in CARMA's proposal to USAID was implemented through a combination of reconnaissance and planning missions to prepare proposals for each region under solicited grants. Under a separate competitive grants program, all aspects of research design and collaboration were self-determined by the principal investigators preparing the proposals.

The competitive grants program has been successful in bringing new researchers and research ideas to the program, but the transactions costs have been high, proposals have not always been adequately linked to USAID objectives, and projects have been ambiguous on results. While the reconnaissance and planning missions proved advantageous in establishing research programs and nurturing collaboration, there were also a number of disadvantages:

- BASIS regional projects have taken on a rolling-term horizon without clear ending dates.
- Proposals have sometimes been weak to lacking.
- Funding has been concentrated in a few CARMA partners.
- The Central Asia and Southeast Asia programs became unsustainable after add-on funding failed to materialize (program costs in the initial proposal to USAID assumed minimum availability and co-mingling of core and add-on funding).
- Co-mingling of core and add-on funds while in some cases created synergies has, at other times, tied up core funding in undesirable ways, made it difficult to account for uses of different funding sources, and disguised overlapping activities that have made accountability difficult.
- Annual preparations of workplans have been time consuming and placed too much emphasis on budgets and finances, rather than on technical substance.

The fifteen guiding principles in **Box 3** are intended to resolve these issues by awarding grants on a competitive basis to multi-year proposals that clearly relate fully-funded activities to fixed implementation schedules that are more easily monitored and evaluated.

C. Management Issues

The BASIS CRSP has provided a number of positive benefits to our partners. In particular, it has enabled international research, training and outreach activities, and fostered collaboration among our partner institutions that would not have otherwise taken place.

However, our effectiveness is constrained by a number of problems. In particular, matching requirements are limiting the ability of our non-Title XII institutions to participate, and low core funding is limiting both our ability to expand CARMA participation and achieve our global mission. In addition, compared with other CRSPs, the ME has higher transaction costs (due to greater dependency on add-ons), nearly the

Box 3: Guiding Principles for Selecting and Funding Future Activities

1. An RFP, designed by the Renewal Committee, will be issued in March 2000 for pre-proposals to current and prospective CARMA partners.
2. Pre-proposals must address the research themes and global priorities described in the RFP.
3. Pre-proposals will have an annual target funding level determined by the renewal committee; e.g., \$200,000 to \$250,000 per year.
4. All activities in accepted proposals will be covered by core funding. Unlike our original proposal to USAID, there will be no assumption of cost-sharing between core and add-on funding.
5. The number of pre-proposals solicited and accepted will be based on the size of the CRSP earmark dedicated by USAID/AFS to the BASIS CRSP.
6. Pre-proposals will assume a fixed funding cycle to be determined by the program renewal committee; e.g., 2-3 years.
7. Matching levels and sources will need to be explicit and show (on average for those institutions participating in a pre-proposal) that 25% of US costs are being matched with non-federal funds.
8. Pre-proposals submitted will be evaluated by an external committee (including USAID) appointed by the ME o/a August 2000 and proposal selections made.
9. Only those pre-proposals approved by the external committee will be included in the draft proposal to USAID/AFS submitted in November 2000.
10. It is anticipated that pre-proposals will be awarded by the spring of 2001 once the CRSP earmark has been announced by USAID/AFS.
11. The competitive grants program will be discontinued in 2000, and the funds normally dedicated to it (\$150,000) will be allocated instead to proposal development for those pre-proposals awarded.
12. All proposals must be finalized and MOUs signed with US and foreign partners by September 2001 in order to ensure timely disbursement of funds by October 2001.
13. Future workplans and activity reporting will be evaluated against these proposals and annual funds correspondingly increased or decreased on a merit basis, as funding allows.
14. Delays in activity reporting and submission of workplans will be penalized by reducing core funding levels.
15. Add-ons will still be encouraged, but not assumed to be available. The renewal committee will be asked to advise on ways to improve incentives for our partners to solicit add-ons and to better manage the additional costs they represent to the CRSP.

same fixed costs, but a lower revenue base. The Board of Directors has voiced its concern that structural changes are needed if the interest and participation of BASIS partners is to be sustained.

According to USAID procurements, changing the ME would require re-competing the BASIS CRSP contract. The University of Wisconsin wants to retain the ME but believes fundamental changes are needed to allow the ME to become a feasible entity, in particular by reducing transactions costs and providing greater core funding.

The final proposal will need to deal with these and other concerns as advised by the following bodies:

- USAID-funded management evaluation and BASIS External Evaluation Panel in the spring of 2000.
- A subcommittee, convened by the University of Wisconsin, will explore options for redesigning the CRSP management with an eye toward reducing functions, lowering costs, and decentralizing certain administrative activities (e.g. subcontracting).
- This subcommittee will present its proposal to the program renewal committee.

D. Size and Composition of CARMA

A number of CARMA institutions have been very active in BASIS programs, others have been less- to non-active. CARMA's response to RFPs released by the ME in the past year have not been robust, raising concerns about our ability to respond to global research and policy needs of USAID. Our overseas partners have at times expressed a lack of connection with the global mission of the CRSP and the need for greater involvement in decision making.

Certain of these incentive problems can be corrected by changes in management organization, increasing core funds, and retooling our global research and regional priorities. In particular, we hope that all CARMA partners, as participating institutions, will contribute to the CRSP Vision Statement and comply with CRSP Guidelines. However, the ME has to anticipate that the current CARMA composition may change or institutions added depending on the global priorities defined and on the level of participation, institutional backstopping, and technical breadth of partner institutions.

Using RFPs to determine CARMA is not satisfactory, since pegging pre-proposals to availability of core funds could unnecessarily limit the size of CARMA, and adversely affect its capacity to respond to add-on opportunities. It is important that CARMA's size be restricted to maintain incentives for existing partners to participate but in a way that ensures its effectiveness and responsiveness.

The program renewal committee will advise the ME on the appropriate size and composition of CARMA, and on the process for selecting members.

D. Vision Statement

Urgent priority needs to be given to defining global research themes/priorities that will guide development of pre-proposals and determine funding. A results framework is needed to link these priorities to results and USAID Strategic Objectives. The guidelines in **Box 4** are intended to achieve this purpose.

Box 4: Vision Statement

1. The TC chair will head a subcommittee to prepare the vision statement.
2. The following should be reviewed and synthesized for creating the new vision statement:
 - CARMA's initial proposal to USAID
 - *Global Indicative Research Agenda* and *BASIS Results Framework*
 - Regional research themes articulated in reconnaissance and planning reports
 - BASIS annual activity reports and workplans
 - USAID strategic objectives
3. An email conference in December 1999 will solicit views from existing CARMA researchers and partners
4. New research themes and priorities should rank research questions by order of priority and connect those questions to regional foci and USAID strategic objectives.
5. The vision statement will be circulated to USAID regional bureaus in February for their technical input and preliminary indications of "add-on" support and/or interest.
6. After incorporating comments of the program renewal committee and USAID, the vision statement will guide solicitation of RFPs in March 2000.

E. Renewal Committee

The **Renewal Committee**(RC) offers guidance to the BASIS ME in planning and preparing the renewal proposal. As indicated in **Box 5**, the RC will meet to define research themes and objectives of the BASIS CRSP for Phase II and to advise on the management structure. The RC will meet o/a February 2000 with the following objectives: (1) review the Vision Statement, (2) define global priorities, (3) determine criteria for RFP, (4) determine collaborative input, (5) review the management structure, or (6) deal with other renewal issues that may arise.

The ME will provide material that will assist the RC in preparing for the meeting and in accomplishing these objectives. RC members are encouraged to review material from other sources that would assist them in suggesting processes to make the BASIS CRSP more efficient and effective in Phase II.

Box 5: Program Renewal Committee

1. The ME will appoint the committee including no more than 10 people from current research partners. At least two members will be invited to represent current international partners
2. The ME program director will chair the committee
3. Members on the committee will be chosen to include diverse skills and experiences: prior research or management experience with the BASIS CRSP, knowledge of CRSP guidelines and procedures, knowledge of operating modalities of other CRSPs, and/or knowledge of USAID strategic goals, objectives and priorities
4. Committee members will serve on behalf of present and future CARMA members not in attendance.
5. Substitutions based on availability of people will be freely made to keep the proposal renewal process on track.
6. Tasks: The committee will be charged with the following responsibilities:
 - ⇒ Finalize the vision statement including global research themes and priorities
 - ⇒ Assist with developing the RFPs (target funding levels, time frame, regional priorities, qualifications and other parameters)
 - ⇒ Develop criteria for evaluating preproposals
 - ⇒ Help determine the appropriate size and composition of CARMA
 - ⇒ Advise on the management structure of the CRSP
7. The BASIS ME will try to cost-share the expenses of appointed members of the committee

F. Costs of Program Renewal

Any and all administrative costs associated with program renewal must be borne out of the ME's administrative budget or non-federal resources of contributing partners. Certain expenses related to development of a vision statement and regional priorities are research expenses. A priori, the ME will fully cover the costs of the BASIS EEP and site visits, the costs of the proposal renewal committee, and costs of proposal assembly and drafting. Other expenses of the program renewal committee will be cost-shared between the ME, BASIS regional programs, and institutional partners on a case by case basis.